

***"We Need UAFA And...It Needs To Be Part Of Immigration Reform"***

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**(Washington, DC)** – Today, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) joined [Rep. Jerold Nadler \(D-NY\)](#), the lead chief sponsor, and other Members of Congress, advocates, and families for a press conference to reintroduce the Uniting American Families Act. UAFA would add the term “permanent partner” to sections of the Immigration and Naturalization Act that apply to married heterosexual couples. This legislation would afford equal immigration benefits to permanent partners -- the same benefits as exist for married heterosexuals, and it would impose the same restrictions, enforcement standards and penalties as are currently in immigration law. The following is the text of Rep. Gutierrez' statement, as prepared for delivery, at [the press conference](#) that took place on the Capitol grounds at approximately 1:00 p.m. ET.

REP. GUTIERREZ: Thank you to my friends and colleagues for organizing this press conference. I will be brief.

As I continue around the country on the Campaign for American Children and Families

tour -- and we will have activities in Chicago on Saturday, Milwaukee on Sunday, Detroit on Monday and Charlotte next Wednesday -- I am hearing from families that are being split apart by our record-setting rate of deportation and you know what? Those families don't always fit into the nice little boxes of mom, dad, and two kids, but reflect the diversity and complexity of modern families.

If deportations or an inflexible visa system or any of the problems of our immigration system are holding back and splitting up American families, it is holding back gay and lesbian families as much or more. That is why we need UAFa and why it needs to be part of immigration reform and why I support Rep. Lofgren's specific efforts on administrative relief from the White House.

Our immigration laws ought to reflect reality and provide a legal structure to the way human beings actually are, not try to impose an alternative reality on human beings. Human beings move from place to place and country to country and human beings fall in love. It is our nature.

Our laws ought to recognize reality and regulate it so that it works for the American people on our terms. We ought to keep our country secure and welcoming in a way that the rights of individuals already here and those who want to come legally are balanced and respected. It is as simple as that.

As it stands now, our laws keep too many people out that we should be welcoming in through a legal process and it kicks too many people out that should be allowed to stay in America because of their deep roots and family obligations -- all while not doing a good enough job keeping out or kicking out people who pose a real threat to us like hardcore criminals.

I have made no secret of the fact that I think President Obama can do more to keep families together and that the focus of changes this year needs to be administrative and procedural because legislation is very unlikely. But I see the Uniting American Families Act as a key component of the bigger immigration struggle and we have to hold Members accountable -- in both parties -- on the immigration issue.

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